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A DESCRIPTION OF THE FIRST EXPLORATION OF PETRA

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A TRANSCRIPT OF THE JOURNALS WRITTEN OR DICTATED BY
W.J. BANKES
DURING HIS JOURNEYS TO AND FROM PETRA IN 1818
with a Foreword, Introduction and Notes,
a brief paper entitled THE END OF THE JOURNEY'
and a commentary on 'LETTER V' OF IRBY AND MANGLES' *TRAVELS IN EGYPT AND NUBIA,*
SYRIA, AND ASIA MINOR

After Burckhardt's 'rediscovery' of Petra in 1812, no other Europeans were able to visit the site until William John Bankes led an expedition in 1818. Unlike Burckhardt, Bankes and his companions were granted two days in which they could freely explore and record as much as possible. They used the time to the full, and with great energy and skill produced an astonishingly large collection of information.

Bankes kept a journal recording the journey from Jerusalem around the southern end of the Dead Sea to Petra, the discoveries made there, and then their journey north through Transjordan as far as Zerka Ma'in, where the journal suddenly breaks off. Much of this was used by Irby & Mangles for 'Letter V' in their *Travels in Egypt and Nubia, Syria, and Asia Minor; during the years 1817 & 1818* (London, 1823). The original journal, which includes some information not used, or changed, by Irby and Mangles, remained at Bankes' family home, Kingston Lacy in the county of Dorset, until the house was given to the National Trust in 1981.

The journal, together with many of Bankes' papers, is now in the Dorset History Centre, Dorchester. Bankes wrote some of it in his own hand and dictated some to Irby, and in parts it is very difficult to decipher. However, Norman Lewis, who has studied Bankes' life and travels for many years and was the first to draw attention to the wealth of information in Bankes' unpublished papers,¹ has made a very careful transcript of the journal, with a foreword, introduction, notes, and a description of what happened at the end of the journey, after the journal breaks off.

1. See for instance, LEWIS N.N., 'William John Bankes in Petra'. Pages 10-12 in T. WEBER and R. WENNING (eds), *Petra. Antike Felsstadt zwischen arabischer Tradition und griechischer Norm*. Mainz: von Zabern, 1997; LEWIS N.N., SARTRE-FAURIAT A., SARTRE M., 'William John Bankes. Travaux en Syrie d'un voyageur oublié. *Syria* 73, 1996: 57-100; LEWIS N.N. & MACDONALD M.C.A., 'W. J. Bankes and the identification of the Nabataean Script', with appendices by S. CLACKSON, R.G. HOYLAND, & M. SARTRE. *Syria* 80, 2003 [2006]: 41-110.

This transcript can now be consulted at the Dorset History Centre
(www.dorsetforyou.com/index.jsp?articleid=2203).

Copies have also been deposited in

- the Bodleian Library, Oxford,
- the British Library,
- the Cambridge University Library,
- the library of the Council for British Research in the Levant, in Amman,
- the library of the Institut Français du Proche-Orient (Damas, Alep, Beyrouth, Amman),
- and the library of the Palestine Exploration Fund, London.